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DE RUEHSO #1199 3211115
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 171115Z NOV 06
FM AMCONSUL SAO PAULO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6066
INFO RHEHNSC/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 7137
RUEHRI/AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO PRIORITY 7600
RUCPDO/USDOC WASHDC 2624

UNCLAS SAO PAULO 001199

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STATE INR/R/MR; IIP/R/MR; WHA/PD

DEPT PASS USTR

USDOC 4322/MAC/OLAC/JAFEE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [OPRC](#) [OIIP](#) [ETRD](#) [BR](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQ: IRAN ROLE IN IRAQ; MIDDLE EAST:
LEBANON, U.S. MIDTERM ELECTIONS; SAO PAULO

1. "To Negotiate With Iran? That Is The Question"

International affairs commentator Newton Carlos wrote in liberal, largest national circulation daily Folha de S. Paulo (11/17): "The bipartisan committee that is looking for a way to get the US out of the Iraqi quagmire has already signaled that it is considering a regional conference in the Middle East in which Americans and Iranians would be the major protagonists.... A direct dialogue between the US and Iran has been compared with the diplomatic initiative that led to the reestablishment of relations with communist China in the 70's.... Experts are convinced that the 'major dispute,' both for Tehran and Washington, is located in Iraq. The idea of a dialogue is not new. Earlier this year, the Bush administration tried to resume it, even limited to the 'Iraq question,' but difficulties in the agenda prevented the idea from advancing."

2. "Setback In Lebanon"

Liberal, largest national circulation daily Folha de S. Paulo editorialized (11/15): "Lebanon is experiencing another serious political crisis.... The reason is the Parliament's recently approved motion in support of UN plans to create an international court to judge those responsible for Rafik Hariri's murder.... UN investigations have indicated the participation of major Syrian authorities in the crime.... The US and the West have supported Prime Minister Fuad Siniora's government.... But the situation may change. Following the Democratic victory in the US midterm elections, pressures for the Bush administration to resume negotiations with Syria are increasing, and that would be good. Damascus would then pull away from Iran and help Washington to try to control the chaos in Iraq in exchange for the return of the Golan Heights. However, it is likely that Syria wants to resume control of Lebanon too, which would be a step backwards. What remains to be seen is whether, on behalf of some relief of the situation in Iraq, the US would give up supporting Siniora."

3. "History's Revenge"

Sociologist Demetrio Magnoli commented in center-right O Estado de [S. Paulo](#) (11/16): "There are indications that the Baker Commission is anticipating a bloody fragmentation of Iraq into three autonomous entities and will propose something like a 'withdrawal to the neighborhood.' That means the removal of the occupation troops from Iraqi cities to bases in the Iraqi desert and neighboring nations as a means of providing support to Baghdad's government and dissuading both Iran and Syria from directly interfering in the Iraqi civil

war.... In addition to expanding the horrible ethnic cleansing, Iraq's fragmentation would destroy the basis of the regional order.... The failure of the Bush Doctrine launches a general war threat over the Middle East. The US is probing the possibility of opening negotiations with Iran and Syria. On the other hand, Israel is openly preparing to wage a war against these two nations."

McMullen